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from the author

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D I S C O U R S E, &c.

[Price Three Shillings.]



A
DISCOURSE,
DELIVERED TO THE
STUDENTS
OF THE
ROYAL ACADEMY,
ON THE

Distribution of the Prizes, *December 10, 1784.*

BY THE
PRESIDENT.

*Reginald Bird
Ks.*

L O N D O N :

Printed by THOMAS CADELL, PRINTER to the
ROYAL ACADEMY.

M.DCC.LXXXV.





A

DISCOURSE, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

IN consequence of the situation in which I have the honour to be placed in this Academy, it has often happened, that I have been consulted by the young Students who intend to spend some years in Italy, concerning the method of regulating their studies.

I AM, as I ought to be, sollicitously desirous to communicate every result of my experience and observation ;

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and my openness and facility in giving my opinions may make some amends for whatever may be defective in them ; yet I fear my answers have not been often to their satisfaction. Indeed I have never been sure, that I understood perfectly what they meant, and was not without some suspicion that they had not themselves very distinct Ideas of the object of their Enquiry.

If the thing required was to point out the path that leads to excellence ; if they wished to know whom they were to take for their guides ; what to adhere to, and what to avoid ; where they were to bait, and where they were to take up their rest ; what was to be tasted only, and what should be their diet : such general rules of conduct, are certainly proper for a Student to ask, and for me, to the best of my capacity, to give ; but these have been already given ; these Rules have in reality been the subject of almost all my Discourses from this place. But I am rather inclined to think, that by *method of study*, they meant (as several do mean) that the times and the seasons should be prescribed, and the order settled, in which every thing was to be done. They probably considered, that it might be useful to point out to what degree of excellence one part of the Art was to be carried, before the Student proceeded to the next, how long they were to continue
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to draw from the antient statues, when to begin to compose, and when to apply to the study of colouring.

SUCH a detail of instruction might be extended with a great deal of plausible and ostentatious amplification. But it would at best be useless. Our studies will be for ever, in a very great degree, under the direction of chance; like travellers we must take what we can get, and when we can get it, whether it is, or is not administered to us in the most commodious manner, in the most proper place, or at the exact minute when we would wish to have it.

TREATISES on Education, and method of study, have always appeared to me to have one general fault. They proceed upon a false supposition of life; as if we possessed not only a power over events and circumstances, but as if we had greater power over ourselves than I believe any of us will be found to possess. Instead of supposing ourselves to be perfect patterns of wisdom and virtue, it seems to me more reasonable to treat ourselves (as I am sure we must now and then treat others) like humourfome children, whose fancies are often to be indulged in order to keep them in good-humour with themselves and their pursuits. It is necessary to use some artifice of this kind in

all processes, which, by their very nature are long, tedious, and complex, in order to prevent our taking that aversion to our studies, which the continual shackles of methodical restraint is sure to produce.

I WOULD rather wish a Student, as soon as he goes abroad, to employ himself upon whatever he has been incited to, by any immediate impulse, than to go sluggishly about a prescribed task ; whatever he does in such a state of mind little advantage accrues from it, as nothing sinks deep enough to leave any lasting impression behind it ; and it is impossible that any thing should be well understood, or well done, that is taken into a reluctant understanding, and executed with a servile hand.

THERE is great advantage, and indeed it is necessary towards intellectual health, that the mind should be recreated and refreshed with a variety in our studies, that in the irksomeness of uniform pursuit we should be relieved (and if I may say deceived) as much as possible. Besides, the minds of men are so very differently constituted, that it is impossible to find one method which shall be suitable to all. It is of no use to prescribe to those who have no talents ; and those who have talents will find methods for themselves,

themselves, methods dictated to them by their own particular dispositions, and by the experience of their own particular necessities.

HOWEVER, I would not be understood to extend this doctrine to the younger Students ; the first part of the life of a Student, like that of other school-boys, must necessarily be a life of restraint. The grammar, the rudiments, however unpalatable, must at all events be mastered. After a habit is acquired of drawing correctly from the model (whatever it may be) which he has before him, the rest I should think may be safely left to chance ; always supposing that the Student is *employed*, and that his studies are directed to the proper object.

A PASSION for his Art, and an eager desire to excel, will more than supply the place of method.

By leaving a Student to himself, he may possibly be led to undertake matters above his strength. But the trial will at least have this advantage, it will discover to himself his own deficiencies ; and this discovery alone, is a very considerable acquisition.

ANOTHER

ANOTHER inconvenience may attend those bold and arduous attempts; frequent failure may discourage. This evil, however, is not more pernicious than the flow proficiency which is the natural consequence of too easy tasks.

WHATEVER advantages method may have in dispatch of business (and there it certainly has many) I have but little confidence of its efficacy in acquiring excellence in any Art whatever. Indeed, I have always strongly suspected, that this love of method, on which some people appear to place so great dependance, is, in reality, at the bottom, a love of idleness, a want of sufficient energy to put themselves into immediate action; it is a sort of an apology to themselves for doing nothing.

I HAVE known Artists, who may truly be said to have spent their whole lives, or at least the most precious part of their lives, in planning methods of study, and never beginning, resolving, however, to put it all in practice at some time or other—when a certain period arrives—when proper conveniences are procured, or when they remove to a certain place better calculated for study.

It is not uncommon for such people to go abroad with the most honest and sincere resolution of studying hard, when they shall arrive at the end of their journey. The same want of exertion, arising from the same cause which made them at home put off the day of labour until they had found a proper scheme for it, still continues in Italy.

In the practice of art as well as in morals, it is necessary to keep a watchful and jealous eye over ourselves; idleness assuming the specious disguise of industry, will lull to sleep all suspicion of our want of an active exertion of our strength; a provision of endless apparatus, a bustle of infinite enquiry and research, or even a mere mechanical labour of copying, may be employed, to evade and shuffle off real labour, the real labour of thinking.

I HAVE declined for these reasons to point out any particular method and course of study to young Artists on their arrival in Italy. I have left it to their own prudence, a prudence which will grow and improve upon them in the course of unremitted, real industry, directed by a real love of their profession, and an unfeigned admiration of those who have been universally admitted as patterns of excellence in the art.

IN the exercise of that general prudence, I shall here submit to their consideration such miscellaneous observations as have occurred to me on considering the mistaken notions, or evil habits which have prevented the progress towards that excellence which the natural abilities of several Artists might otherwise have enabled them to make.

FALSE opinions and vicious habits have done far more mischief to Students, and to Professors too, than any wrong methods of study.

UNDER the influence of sloth, or of some mistaken notion, is that disposition which always wants to lean on other men. Such Students are always talking of the prodigious progress they should make if they could but have the advantage of being taught by some particular eminent Master. To him they would wish to transfer that care which they ought and must take of themselves. Such are to be told, that after the Rudiments are past, very little of our Art can be taught by others. The most skilful Master can do little more than put the end of the clue into the hands of his Scholar, by which he must conduct himself.

It is true, the beauties and the defects of the works of our predecessors may be pointed out ; the principles on which their works are conducted, may be explained ; the Academy may spread out the great examples of Antient Art before them ; but the most sumptuous entertainment is prepared in vain, if the guests will not take the trouble of helping themselves.

EVEN the Academy itself, where every convenience for study is procured, and laid before them, may, from that very circumstance, from having no difficulties to encounter in their pursuit, be the cause of a slackening of their industry.

It is not uncommon to see Young Artists who, whilst they were struggling with every obstacle in their way, exert themselves with such success as to outstrip their competitors who were in possession of every means of improvement, and from the promising expectation which was formed, on so much being done with so little means, have been taken up by a Patron who has supplied them with every convenience of study ; from that time their industry and eagerness of pursuit has forsok them, they stand still, and see others rush on before them.

SUCH men are like certain animals, who will feed only when there is but little provender, and that got at with difficulty through the bars of a rack, but refuse to touch it when there is an abundance before them.

PERHAPS too, such a falling off may proceed from their faculties being overpowered by the immensity of the materials, it appearing hopeless when they see so far before them, ever to get at the end of their journey.

AMONG the first moral qualities therefore, which a Student ought to cultivate, is a just and manly confidence in himself, or rather in the effects of that unconquerable industry which he is resolved to possess.

WHEN Raffaello, by means of his connection with Bramante, the Pope's Architect, was fixed upon to adorn the Vatican with his works, he had then done nothing that marked in him any great superiority over his contemporaries; though he was then but young, he had under his direction the most considerable Artists of his age; and we know what kind of men those were; a lesser mind would have sunk under such a weight, and if we should judge from the meek and gentle disposition which we are told was the character of Raffaello, we
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might expect this would happen to him ; but his strength appeared to encrease in proportion as exertion was required ; and it is not improbable, but that we are indebted to that good fortune which first placed him in that conspicuous situation, for those great examples of excellence which he has left behind him.

THE observations to which I wish to point your attention, do not relate to errors which in general are committed by those who have no claim to merit, but to such inadvertencies as men of parts only can fall, by the overrating, or the abuse of some real, though perhaps subordinate excellence. The errors last alluded to is that of backward, timid characters, those I shall now speak of belong to another class. To those Artists who are distinguished for the readiness and facility of their invention. It is undoubtedly a splendid and a desirable accomplishment to be able to design instantaneously any given subject. It is an excellence that I believe every Artist would wish to possess : but unluckily, the manner in which this dexterity is acquired habituates the mind to be contented with first thoughts, without choice or selection. The judgment, after it has been long passive, by degrees loses its power of becoming active when exertion is necessary.

WHOEVER, therefore, has this talent, must in some measure undo, what he has had the habit of doing, or give a new turn to his mind ; great works, which are to live and stand the criticism of posterity, are not done at a fit. A proportionable time is required for deliberation and circumspection. I remember when at Rome looking at the fighting Gladiator in company with an eminent Sculptor, on remarking the skill with which the whole together is composed, and the minute attention of the Artist to the change of every muscle in that momentary exertion of strength ; he was of opinion that a work so perfect, required near the whole life of man to perform.

I BELIEVE, if we look around us, we shall find, that in the sister art of Poetry, what has been soon done, has been as soon forgotten. The judgment and practice of a great Poet on this occasion is worthy attention. Metastasio, who has so much and so justly distinguished himself throughout Europe, at his outset was an *Improvisatore*, or extempore Poet, a description of men not uncommon in Italy : It is not long since he was asked by a friend, if he did not think the custom of inventing and reciting *extempore*, which he practised when a boy, in his character of an *Improvisatore*, might not be considered as a happy beginning of his education ; he
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thought it, on the contrary, a disadvantage to him ; that he had acquired by that habit, a carelessness and incorrectness, which cost him much trouble to overcome, and to substitute in its place a totally different habit, that of thinking with selection, and of expressing himself with correctness and precision.

HOWEVER extraordinary it may appear, it is certainly true, that the inventions of the *Pittore improvvisatore*, as they may be called, have, notwithstanding their boast that it is all spun from their own brain, very rarely any thing that has in the least the air of originality of invention : their compositions are generally common place ; uninteresting, without character or expression of any kind ; and appear, as we say sometimes of flowery speeches, to have no ideas annexed to the words.

I WOULD not be thought however, by what has been said, to oppose the use, the advantage, the necessity there is, of a Painter's being readily able to express his ideas by sketching, and the farther he can carry such designs, so much the better. The evil to be apprehended is his resting there, and not correcting them afterward from nature, or taking the trouble to look about him for whatever assistance the works of others will afford him.

WE are not to suppose, that when a Painter sits down to deliberate on any work, that he has all his knowledge to seek ; he must not only be able to draw extempore the human figure in every variety of action, he must be acquainted likewise with the general principles of composition, and a habit of recollecting, whilst he is composing ; of the effect of the masses of light and shadow, that will attend such a disposition.

HIS mind is entirely occupied by his attention to the whole. It is an after consideration to determine the attitude and expression of individual figures.

IT is in this period of his work that I would recommend to every Artist to look over his porto-folio, or pocket-book, in which he has treasured up all the happy inventions, all the extraordinary and expressive attitudes that he has met with in the course of his studies ; not only for the sake of borrowing from these studies whatever may be applicable to his own work, but likewise for the great advantage he will receive by bringing the ideas of great Artists more distinctly before his mind, and teach him to invent other figures in that stile.

SIR Francis Bacon speaks with approbation of the provisionary methods Demosthenes and Cicero employed to assist their invention; and he illustrates their use by a quaint comparison after his manner. These particular *studios* being not immediately connected with our Art, I need not repeat, but only observe that it totally opposes the general received opinions that are floating in the world, concerning genius and inspiration.

I KNOW there are many Artists of great fame, who appear never to have looked out of themselves, and who probably would think it derogatory to their character to be supposed to borrow from any other Painter. But when we recollect, and compare the works of such men, with those who took to their assistance the inventions of others, we shall be convinced of the great advantage of this practice.

THE two most eminent men that occur to me for readiness of invention, are Luca Giordano and La Fage; one in painting, and the other in drawing.

To such extraordinary powers as were possessed by both of those Artists, we cannot refuse the character of Genius: at the same time, it must be acknowledged, that it was
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that kind of mechanic Genius which operates without a great deal of assistance of the head. In all their works, which are (as might be expected) very numerous, we may look in vain for any thing that can be said to be original and striking; and yet, according to the ordinary ideas of originality, they have as good pretensions as most Painters; for they borrowed very little from others, and still less will any Artist, that can distinguish between excellence and infidelity, ever borrow from them.

To those men, and to all such, let us oppose the practice of the first of Painters.

I SUPPOSE we shall all agree, that no man ever possessed a greater power of invention, and that less stood in need of foreign assistance, than Raffaello: and yet, when he was designing one of his greatest as well as his latest works, the Cartoons, it is very apparent he had the studies which he had made from Masaccio before him.

Two noble figures of St. Paul, which he found there, he adopted in his own work: one of them he took for St. Paul preaching at Athens; and the other for the same Saint, when chastising the forcerer Elymas. Another figure in the same work, whose head is sunk in his breast,
with

with his eyes shut, appearing deeply wrapt up in thought, was introduced amongst the listeners to the preaching of St. Paul.

THE most material alteration that is made in those two figures of St. Paul, is the addition of the left hands, which are not seen in the original. It is a rule that Raffaelle observed, (and indeed ought never to be dispensed with) in a principal figure, to shew both hands, that it should never be a question, what is become of the other hand?

FOR the Sacrifice at Litra, he took the whole ceremony much as it stands in an antient Bas-relievo, since published in the Admiranda.

MANY other instances might be produced of this great Painter's not disdaining assistance. I have given examples from those Pictures only of Raffaelle which we have amongst us.

IT may be remarked, that this work of Masaccio, from which he has borrowed so freely, was a public work, and at no further distance than Florence; so that if he had considered it a disgraceful theft, he was sure to be detected; but he was well satisfied, that his character for

Invention would be little affected by such a discovery ; nor is it, but in the opinion of those who are ignorant of the materials required, and the manner in which great works are built.

THOSE who steal from mere poverty, who having nothing of their own, cannot exist a minute without making such depredations ; who are so poor that they have no place in which they can even deposit what they have taken : to men of this description nothing can be said ; but to such Artists as I suppose myself now speaking, men whom I consider as competently provided with all common necessities and conveniencies, and who do not desire to steal baubles and common trash, but wish only to possess peculiar rarities which they select to ornament their cabinet, and who take care to give in return what is of equal or of greater value than that which they have taken : such men surely need not be ashamed of that friendly intercourse that ought to exist among Artists, of receiving and giving assistance ; receiving from the dead and giving to the living, and perhaps to those who are yet unborn.

THE daily food and nourishment of the mind of an Artist is found in the great works of his predecessors. There is no other way of becoming great himself. *Serpens*

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nisi Serpentem commederit non fit draco, is a remark of whimsical Natural History, which I have read, I do not recollect where ; but however false as to Dragons, it is applicable enough to Artists.

RAFFAELLE, as appears from what has been said, had carefully studied the works of Masaccio ; and indeed there was no other, if we except Michael Angelo (whom he likewise imitated) so worthy of his attention ; and though his manner was dry and hard, his compositions formal and not enough diversified, according to the custom of Painters in that early period, yet his works possess that grandeur and simplicity which accompanies, and even sometimes proceeds from, regularity and hardness of manner. When we consider the barbarous state of the Arts before him, when skill in drawing was so little understood, that the best of the Painters could not even foreshorten the foot, but every figure appeared to stand upon his toes ; and what served for drapery, had, from the hardness and smallness of the folds, more the appearance of cords clinging round the body, than clothing of any kind. He first introduced large drapery flowing in an easy and natural manner : indeed he appears to be the first that discovered the path that leads to every excellence to which the Art afterwards ar-

rived, and may therefore be justly considered as the Great Father of modern Art.

THOUGH I have been led on to a longer digression respecting this great Painter than I intended, yet I cannot avoid mentioning another virtue which he possessed in a very eminent degree; he was as much distinguished among his cotemporaries for his diligence and industry, as he was for the natural faculties of his mind. We are told, that his whole attention was absorbed in the pursuit of his Art, and that he acquired the name of Masaccio*, from his total disregard to his dress, his person, and all the common concerns of life. He is indeed a signal instance what well-directed diligence will do in a short time; he lived but twenty-seven years, yet in that short space carried the Art so far beyond what it had before reached, that he appears to stand alone as a model for his successors. Vafari gives a long catalogue of Painters and Sculptors, who formed their taste, and learnt their Art, from studying his works; amongst those, he names Michael Angelo, Lionardo de Vinci, Pietro Perugino,

* His family name is unknown; his christian name was Tomaso: as the English abbreviate this name by taking the first part, the Italians take the latter part only, as Massinello for Tomaso Anello.—The addition of accio implies some deformity or imperfection attending that person or thing to which it is applied.

Raffaelle, Bartolomeo, Andrea del Sarto, Il Rosso, and Perino del Vaga.

THE habit of contemplating and brooding over the ideas of great geniusses, till you find yourself warmed by the contact, is the true method of forming an Artist's like mind ; it is impossible, in the presence of those great men, to think, or invent in a mean manner ; a state of mind is acquired that is disposed to receive those ideas only which relish of grandeur and simplicity.

BESIDES the general advantage of forming the taste by such an intercourse ; there is another of a particular kind, which was suggested to me by the practice of Raffaelle, when imitating the work of which I have been speaking. The figure of the Proconsul Sergius Paulus is taken from the Felix of Masaccio, though one is a front figure, and the other seen in profile ; the action is likewise somewhat changed, but it is plain Raffaelle had that figure in his mind. There is a circumstance, indeed otherwise of no great moment, which marks it very particularly ; Sergius Paulus wears a crown of laurel ; this is hardly reconcileable to strict propriety, and the *costume* of which Raffaelle was in general a good observer, but he found it so in Masaccio, and that was the sole cause of its
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being found in his picture ; he was not at so much pains of disguise as to change it.

It appears to be an excellent practice thus to suppose the figures which you wish to adopt in the works of those great Painters to be statues ; and to give, as Raffaele has here given, another view, taking care to preserve all the spirit and grace that is in the original.

I SHOULD hope, from what has been lately said, that it is not necessary to guard myself against any supposition of recommending an entire dependance upon former masters. I do not desire that you should get other people to do your business, or to think for you : I only wish you to consult with, to call in, as Counsellors, men the most distinguished for their knowledge and experience, the result of which council must ultimately depend upon yourself ; such conduct in the commerce of life has never been considered as disgraceful, or in any respect to imply intellectual imbecility ; it is a sign rather of that true wisdom, which feels individual imperfection ; and is conscious to itself how much collective observation is necessary to fill the immense extent, and to comprehend the infinite variety of nature. I recommend neither self-dependance nor plagiarism. I advise you only to take that assistance

stance which every human being wants, and which, as appears from the examples that have been given, that the greatest Painters have not disdained to accept. Let me add, that the diligence required in the search and the exertion when found, in accommodating those ideas to your own purpose, is a business which idleness will not, and ignorance cannot perform. But in order more distinctly to explain what kind of borrowing I mean, when I recommend so anxiously the study of the works of great Masters, let us for a minute return again to Raffaele, consider his method of practice, and endeavour to imitate him, in his manner of imitating others.

OF the two figures of St. Paul which I lately mentioned, they are so nobly conceived by Masaccio, that perhaps it was not in the power even of Raffaele himself to raise and improve them, nor has he attempted it; but he has had the address to change in some measure without diminishing the grandeur of their character; he has substituted in the place of a serene composed dignity, that animated expression which was necessary to the more active employment he has assigned them.

IN the same manner he has given more animation to the figure of Sergius Paulus, and to that which is introduced
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in the picture of St. Paul preaching, of which little more than hints are given by Masaccio, which Raffaello has finished. The closing the eyes of this figure, which in Masaccio might be easily mistaken for sleeping, is not in the least ambiguous in the Cartoon; his eyes indeed are closed, but they are closed with such vehemence, that the agitation of a mind *perplexed in the extreme* is seen at the first glance; but what is most extraordinary, and I think particularly to be admired, is to see the same idea continued through the whole figure, even to the drapery, which is so closely muffled about him, that even his hands are not seen; by this happy correspondence between the expression of the countenance, and the disposition of the parts, the figure appears to think from head to foot, and is not unlike the artifice so frequently practised by Poets, of making the sound correspond to the sense. Men of superior talents only are capable of thus using and bringing to bear other mens minds to their own purposes, or are able to make out and finish what was only in the original a hint or imperfect conception. Let me remark, that a readiness in taking such hints, which are always missed by the dull and ignorant, makes no inconsiderable part of that faculty of the mind which is called Genius.

It often happens that hints may be taken and employed for a purpose totally different from that which first suggested the idea.

THERE is a figure of a Bacchante leaning backward, her head thrown quite behind her, which we frequently see in antient Sculpture, and which seems to be a favourite invention, as it is so frequently repeated in Bas-relievos, Camæos, and Intaglios: it is intended to express an enthusiastic, frantic kind of joy. This figure Baccio Bandinelle has adopted (and he knew very well what was worth borrowing) for one of the Marys, in a drawing that I have of that Master, of the Descent from the Cross, to express frantic agony of grief. It is curious to observe, and it is certainly true, that the extremes of contrary passions are expressed by the same action.

IF I was to recommend method in any part of the study of a Painter, it would be in regard to invention, that young Students should not presume to think themselves qualified to invent, till they were acquainted with those stores of invention the world already possess, and had by that means accumulated sufficient materials for the mind to work with. It would certainly be no improper method of forming the mind of a young Artist, to begin with such

exercifes as the Italians call a *Pasticcio*, a compofition of the different excellencies which are difperfed in all other works of the fame kind.

IT is not fupposed that he is to flop here, but to acquire by this means the art of felecting, firft, what is truly excellent in Art, and then what is ftill more excellent in Nature ; a task, which, without this previous ftudy, he will be but ill qualified to perform.

THE doctrine which is here recommended, is acknowledged to be new, and may appear ftange to many. As a ft ranger, then, receive it, without being required to place that entire confidence which might be claimed under authoritative recommendation.

I AM aware of the danger of ftanding on new ground ; it would have been much fafer to have amused or rather abufed your underftanding with a rhapsody about genius and infpiration, of the enthufiafm and divine fury neceffary to poffefs the foul of the Artift, than fimpl y to endeavour to point out the more humble means by which Art is acquired.

AFTER

AFTER you have taken a figure, or any idea of a figure, from any of those great Painters, there is another operation still remaining, which I hold to be indispensably necessary, that is, never to neglect finishing always from Nature this and every part of the work. What is thus taken from a model, though the idea may have been suggested by another, you have a just right to consider as your own property. And here I cannot avoid mentioning a circumstance about placing the model, though to many it may appear trifling.

IT is, rather to possess the model with the attitude you require, than to place him with your own hands: it happens often by this means the model puts himself in an action superior to your own imagination.

IT is a great matter to be in the way of accident, and to be watchful and ready to take advantage of it; besides, when you change the parts of a model, there is danger of putting him in an attitude which no man would naturally fall into.

THIS extends even to drapery touching and altering a fold of the stuff, which serves as a model, for fear of giving it inadvertently a forced form; and it is perhaps bet-

ter to take the chance of another throw, than alter the position in which it was at first accidentally cast.

REMBRANDT, in order to take the advantage of accident, appears often to have used the palate-knife to lay his colours on the canvass instead of the pencil. Whether it is the knife or any other instrument, it is something that does not follow exactly the will. This in the hands of an Artist who knows how to take the advantage of such strokes of chance, will often produce bold and capricious beauties of handling and facility, such as he would not have thought of, or ventured at, with his pencil under the regular restraint of his hand. However, this can be practised on occasions only where no correctness of form is required, such as clouds, stumps of trees, rocks, or broken ground. As it is produced in the same accidental manner, it has the same free unrestrained air as the works of Nature herself.

I AGAIN repeat, you are never to lose sight of nature ; the instant you do, you are all abroad at the mercy of every gust of fashion, without knowing or seeing the point to which you ought to steer. Whatever trips you make, you must still have nature in your eye. Of such deviations as *Art* necessarily requires, I hope in a future

ture Discourse to be able to explain. In the mean time, let me recommend to you, not to have too great dependance on your practice or memory, however strong those impressions may have been made which are there deposited. They are for ever wearing out, and will be at last obliterated, unless they are continually refreshed and repaired.

It is not uncommon to meet with Painters who from a long neglect of cultivating this necessary intimacy with Nature, so long used to their own representation of her, she appears as a stranger, they do not even know her when they see her. I have heard Painters acknowledge, though in that acknowledgment no degradation of themselves was intended, that they can do better without Nature than with her; or, as they expressed it themselves, that it only put them out.

A PAINTER, with such ideas and such habits is indeed in a most hopeless state; the art of seeing Nature, or in other words, the art of using Models, is in reality the great object, the point to which all our studies are directed. As for the power of being able to do tolerably well, from practice alone, let it be valued according to its worth. But I do not see in what manner it can any way

way contribute towards producing more correct or more excellent finished Pictures. Works deserving this character never were, nor never will be produced by memory alone; and I will venture to say, that an Artist who brings to his work a mind furnished with the general principles of Art, and a taste formed upon the best works of the best Artists; in short, a man who knows in what the true excellence of the Art consists, will, with the assistance of Models, which we will likewise suppose he has learnt the art of using, be an over-match for the greatest Painter that ever lived who should be debarred such advantages.

OUR neighbours the French are much in this practice of extempore invention, and their dexterity is such, as even to excite admiration, if not envy; but how rarely can this praise be given to their finished Pictures.

THE late Director of their Academy, *Bouche*, was eminent in this way. When I visited him some years since, in France, I found him at work on a very large Picture, without drawings or models of any kind. On my remarking this particular circumstance, he said, when he was young, studying his art, he found it necessary to use models; but he had left them off for many years.

SUCH

SUCH Pictures as this was, and such as I fear always will be produced by those who work solely from practice or memory, may be a convincing proof of the necessity of the conduct which I have recommended. However, in justice I cannot quit this Painter without adding, that in the former part of his life, when he was in the habit of having recourse to nature, he was not without a considerable degree of merit, enough to make half the Painters of his country his imitators; he had often grace and beauty, and good skill in composition: but I think, all under the influence of a bad taste, but his imitators are indeed abominable.

THOSE Artists who have quitted the service of nature, (whose service when well understood is perfect freedom) and have put themselves under the direction of one knows not what capricious fantastical mistress, who fascinates and overpowers their whole mind, and from which dominion it appears hopeless ever to be reclaimed, since they appear perfectly satisfied, and not at all conscious of their forlorn situation; like the followers of Comus,

*Not once perceive their foul disfigurement;
But boast themselves more comely than before.*

Methinks

Methinks such men, who have found out so short a path, have no reason to complain of the shortness of life, and the extent of art; since life is so much longer than they use for their improvement, or indeed is necessary for the accomplishment of their idea of perfection. On the contrary, he who recurs to nature, at every recurrence renews his strength. The rules of art he is never likely to forget; they are few and simple; but Nature is refined, subtle, and infinitely various, beyond the power and retention of memory; it is necessary, therefore, to have continual recourse to her. In this intercourse, there is no end of his improvement; the longer he lives, the nearer he approaches to the true and perfect idea of Art.

T H E E N D.

11 FE 69